

Please select the top three areas in which you have working knowledge, strong interest, and/or experience:

Equity

Community Health

Climate Education

Statement of Interest:

“Your voice matters.” I’ve heard this phrase countless times, but struggled to find the truth within it. Until I experienced it for myself. At the Massachusetts K-12 Graduation Requirements Council’s listening session in my region, I was one of the few young people there, and the only voice advocating for climate education to become a statewide requirement. Speaking up in that space showed me that leadership means taking initiative when the majority doesn’t. However, I’ve also learned that a great leader is someone who not only speaks up for themselves but also helps others find the courage to do the same. Hence, I strive to join the Climate Action Commission to ensure that youth voices are at the forefront of climate action, especially within our Somerville community. Although Somerville has been known for its innovative and community-oriented action, a major issue is often overlooked: the socio-economic and racial divisions. These divisions lead to marginalized communities, such as BIPOC and lower-income residents, facing greater impacts from the climate crisis, particularly with tree and green space inequity. Yet, the most impacted communities are the ones left out of climate action spaces. As an Indian-American, I’ve frequently been the sole person of color advocating in climate spaces, providing intrinsic motivation to amplify unheard voices and bringing a unique experience that I hope to contribute to the Climate Action Commission. Additionally, I have been involved in climate action and climate education work for several years. My first major climate role began in 9th grade after realizing the significant gap in youth access to climate education and career pathways. As such, I helped launch Climate Tech Academy, an April break program in 2024, introducing 50 K-8 school students to climate technology across sustainable fashion, music and climate, video/media production, and 3D printing for climate solutions. Students engaged in daily seminars with Lesley and Tufts students and guest speakers. After seeing the success of this program, a small group of high schoolers, including myself, collaborated with city partners, including Somerville Public Schools (SPS), and the Somerville Office of Sustainability and Environment, to launch Climate Action Clubs across multiple middle schools. The pilot program focused on schools serving under-resourced communities, which often didn’t have the resources or funding

necessary to supplement the existing climate curriculum. Starting in February 2025 for ten weeks, I facilitated a Climate Action Club with 20+ students, creating an engaging curriculum alongside activities, and supporting students in establishing their own local climate action projects. We have recently started our second year of the Middle School Climate Action Clubs, which have expanded to 5 out of the 6 middle schools. Moreover, this fall, I've been working with SPS's Project Innovation Specialist, Jason Behrens, as an SPS Climate Education Intern & Facilitator. Meeting four times weekly, I spearheaded initiatives, including high schoolers co-leading climate lessons with 5th-grade teachers and leading recruitment and community collaboration for the second year of Climate Action Clubs. Currently, I'm supporting curriculum development for the Climate Action Clubs in partnership with MIT CATE and Mass Audubon and assisting with writing grant applications for the Climate Action Clubs, such as the Somerville OST Innovation and Quality Award.